

5 Environmental Consequences

Environmental Impact of Alternatives A-E

This chapter analyzes the general impacts that could result from implementing the alternatives described in this study. In addition to impacts on visitor experience and education potential, this assessment includes impacts on Gullah/Geechee culture, historic sites and structures, the economy and local communities, and the natural environment. The five alternatives are compared under each impact category. Existing conditions in the study area are described under Alternative E (no action).

Should Congress choose to authorize one of the alternatives in this study or some other alternative, the NPS will be required to prepare a plan specifying how it will meet its responsibilities under the legislation. As part of the planning process, NPS will undertake a more detailed analysis of the environmental impacts of the authorized actions.

Impacts of Visitor Experience and Educational Potential

Alternative A (Gullah/Geechee Coastal Heritage Centers)

Under this alternative, the NPS and/or its governmental and non-profit partners would operate three cultural centers to present a focused interpretive overview of the Gullah/Geechee culture. Because each center would offer a different operational and interpretive emphasis, visitors and students would have the opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of major facets of Gullah/Geechee culture than would be possible under the other alternatives. However, the fact that the cultural centers would be located relatively far apart means that access to this interpretive/educational experience would be more limited than under alternatives B, C and D.

Alternative B (Expanding the Gullah/Geechee Story)

Under this alternative, the NPS and partner agencies would expand the mission of existing park sites to interpret Gullah/Geechee culture. Information about Gullah/Geechee culture would thus be widely dispersed over a multi-state area. Moreover, this alternative would allow the Gullah/Geechee story to be interpreted within the context of particular sites of established historical and cultural importance. Some might view this approach as giving added depth and context to interpretations of Gullah/Geechee culture, while others might feel that it prevents a more focused interpretation of the culture itself.

Alternative C (Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Area)

Establishment of a Gullah/Geechee NHA would allow local communities, organizations, and individuals to come together to achieve goals and implement a vision with respect to interpreting and perpetuating Gullah/Geechee culture. Information about Gullah/Geechee culture would be widely available among a multitude of public and private sites included within the heritage area. Local planners and community activists, with technical assistance from the NPS, would decide how the heritage area is to be promoted to a wide audience and how information about individual sites would

be disseminated to potential visitors. Responsibility for interpretation would largely be shared with individual sites. This alternative requires the greatest amount of commitment and effort from local people in order to be successful.

Alternative D (Alternatives A and C in Combination)

This alternative would provide opportunities for visitor use and education at a combination of cultural centers and sites located within a heritage area. This alternative would combine the benefits of in-depth interpretation of specific themes (cultural centers) and dispersed interpretation of multiple sites (heritage area).

Alternative E (No Action)

Opportunities would remain available for visitors to learn about Gullah culture at various widely dispersed sites throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. However, activities would not be coordinated, and many visitors would not be aware that such opportunities are available.

Impacts on Gullah/Geechee Culture

Alternative A (Gullah/Geechee Coastal Heritage Centers)

Under this alternative, various programs would be made available to assist members of Gullah/Geechee communities. Internship opportunities could be arranged for young people, training could be offered in seeking grants and official recognition for historic sites, and space could be made available at the cultural centers for artisans, performers, and craftspeople and those wishing to demonstrate cultural practices. The NPS would seek to recruit well-qualified individuals from Gullah/Geechee communities to assist in developing and presenting interpretive programs to create a greater appreciation of Gullah/Geechee culture in the public at large. However, interpretive programs would have to meet NPS standards for historical and scholarly presentations, and some members of the community might disagree with the interpretations offered at the centers. Issues regarding who “controls” the Gullah/Geechee story may be more likely to arise under this alternative than under the heritage area concept (Alternative C).

Alternative B (Expanding the Gullah/Geechee Story)

Existing park sites would be encouraged to recruit well-qualified individuals from Gullah/Geechee communities to assist in developing and presenting new interpretive programs. These programs would be designed to expand upon each park’s existing purpose and significance to include aspects of Gullah/Geechee culture. As with Alternative A, issues regarding who “controls” the Gullah/Geechee story could arise under this alternative. Given the potentially large number of sites that could be included under this alternative, the potential exists to expose a wide spectrum of the public to Gullah/Geechee culture. This exposure could be beneficial to individuals and communities seeking to increase awareness of the culture and perpetuate cultural practices.

Alternative C (Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Area)

To a greater extent than Alternatives A and B, this alternative has the potential to involve a wide and diverse range of participants in interpreting Gullah/Geechee culture and perpetuating Gullah/Geechee cultural practices. With a management commission that can be made up of local people, and with responsibility for interpretation shared with individual sites, the heritage area concept allows a variety of complementary and even conflicting points of view to find expression, as

benefits a living, changing culture. This alternative thus provides Gullah/Geechee people the greatest amount of control over their story. Given the large and diverse array of sites that could be included in a heritage area, the potential exists to expose a wide spectrum of the public to Gullah/Geechee culture.

Alternative D (Alternatives A and C in Combination)

This alternative would combine the benefits from the various programs designed to assist Gullah/Geechee communities with the economic benefits offered by tourism to the cultural centers and the heritage area.

Alternative E (no action)

Opportunities would remain available for members of the Gullah/Geechee community to preserve their culture, protect ancestral lands, and educate visitors about Gullah/Geechee culture. However, funding for these opportunities would be harder to come by and activities would be less coordinated over a large area than under the action alternatives.

Impacts on Cultural Sites and Structures

Alternative A (Gullah/Geechee Coastal Heritage Centers)

This alternative would direct new funding for restoration and preservation of existing structures at the proposed heritage centers. Funding would be concentrated at the sites chosen for such centers, e.g., Tibwin Plantation, Hampton Plantation State Historic Site, and the Penn Center. However, each heritage center would direct visitors to other important Gullah/Geechee sites, thereby raising the profile of these sites and possibly making it easier to engage in private fundraising activities for restoration and preservation. In addition, grants may be available to assist in local preservation projects. Overall, this alternative would likely result in beneficial impacts to fewer sites and structures than Alternative C, but the sites and structures affected would receive more thorough and effective treatments.

Alternative B (Expanding the Gullah/Geechee Story)

This alternative would be limited to existing park sites. Expanding the interpretive focus to include Gullah/Geechee culture would not be likely to result in major enhancements of cultural resources, as most such resources will already be subject to a high degree of protective effort.

Alternative C (Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Area)

Under this alternative, a heritage area commission would work with landowners, communities, institutions, and government offices to document and protect important cultural resources (landscapes and structures) of the heritage area. Technical assistance and grant money may be available to rehabilitate and restore historic structures meeting eligibility requirements. In all likelihood, any such grants would have to be matched by local contributions.

Alternative D (Alternatives A and C in Combination)

This alternative would direct funds appropriated by Congress toward rehabilitation/restoration of specified structures at the cultural centers, as well as qualifying structures in the heritage area. (Please note that there is no guarantee Congress would appropriate any funds for this purpose.) Funds for

structures in the heritage area would come in the form of grants and would likely be subject to a requirement that the grants be matched.

Alternative E (no action)

Opportunities would remain for members of Gullah/Geechee communities to raise funds for historic preservation from foundations and other private and public funding sources. However, fundraising would continue to face the obstacles that have hampered past efforts, including ignorance of Gullah/Geechee culture in society at large and limited availability of government grants and matching funds.

Impact on the Economy and Local Communities

Alternative A (Gullah/Geechee Coastal Heritage Centers)

This alternative would attract visitors to the locations of the heritage centers and would direct some of these visitors to other significant sites in adjacent communities. Economic benefits would depend on the level of visitation generated by the centers. The fact that the three centers would be located relatively far apart would mean that economic benefits to the Gullah/Geechee community would be concentrated in fewer areas under this alternative than under the other action alternatives. However, the centers would be sited in such a way as to protect fragile sites from being overwhelmed by visitors.

Alternative B (Expanding the Gullah/Geechee Story)

This alternative could attract additional visitors to existing park areas by expanding the interpretive focus of these areas to include Gullah/Geechee culture. In addition, the expanded interpretive focus could direct some of these visitors to other important Gullah/Geechee sites in adjacent communities. Given the large number of sites that could be included in this alternative and the occurrence of these sites over a large geographic area, it is possible that the economic benefits of tourism would be more widely dispersed under this alternative than would be possible under Alternative A. Dispersed visitation patterns could also prevent fragile sites from being overwhelmed by visitors.

Alternative C (Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Area)

With proper development and promotion, a heritage area could result in increased tourism for many sites associated with Gullah/Geechee culture, with associated economic benefits and demands on infrastructure. A major benefit of the heritage area concept is that it may make possible the interpretation of more individual sites than would be feasible under alternatives A and B. However, a heritage area can only be successful if local communities and individuals are willing to make the large commitments of time and financial resources necessary to start and maintain a heritage area commission. Although Federal funds may be available to assist with start-up of the commission, a heritage area must become financially self-sufficient within a specified time frame, usually ten years.

Alternative D (Alternatives A and C in Combination)

This alternative would generate localized economic benefits associated with the construction of new cultural centers. Additional benefits would arise over a larger area as a result of tourism to both the cultural centers and sites within the heritage area. Large increases in tourism could result in additional public costs to expand necessary infrastructure.

Alternative E (no action)

Economic opportunities would remain available for members of the Gullah/Geechee community at sites throughout North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. However, efforts to improve these opportunities would not have the benefit of enhanced public awareness of Gullah/Geechee culture that would come from interpretation activities at one or more park units, or throughout a heritage area. In addition, such efforts would lack the resources, in the form of both financial and technical assistance that could be made available under the action alternatives.

Impacts on the Natural Environment

Alternative A (Gullah/Geechee Coastal Heritage Centers)

Restoration and adaptive use of existing structures at the cultural centers would not have long-term impacts on natural resources. Development of new structures – for example, at an as yet undesignated site in McIntosh County, Georgia – could result in long-term disturbance to soils, vegetation, and wildlife habitat over a relatively small area.

Alternative B (Expanding the Gullah/Geechee Story)

This alternative would most likely involve an expansion of interpretive focus only and would not involve any construction of new facilities. However, to the extent that any new facilities were constructed, the result could be long-term disturbance to soils, vegetation, and wildlife habitat over a relatively small area.

Alternative C (Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Area)

Under this alternative, a heritage area commission would work with landowners, communities, institutions, and government offices to document and protect important natural resources of the heritage area. Protection for important natural areas could come in the form of zoning restrictions, conservation easements, or similar measures. No land could be acquired by the commission and private property rights would be protected.

Alternative D (Alternatives A and C in Combination)

Development of the cultural centers, together with construction of new cultural facilities in the heritage area, could result in the loss of some natural resources on a relatively small scale. The heritage commission could provide incentives and take other actions short of acquiring land to provide a measure of protection to important natural resources.

Alternative E (no action)

Under this alternative, present trends with respect to natural resources would remain largely unchanged. Accelerated development in coastal areas would continue to result in losses of important natural areas.

Environmental Justice

Alternatives A, B, C, and D

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Presidential Executive Order 12898, “General Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low- Income Populations,” requires all federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing any disproportionately high and/or adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low- income populations and communities.

The action alternatives considered in this study would not have adverse health or environmental effects on minorities or low- income populations or communities as defined in the Environmental Protection Agency’s Draft Environmental Justice Guidance (July 1996). In fact, the alternatives outlined herein offer various proposed ways for assisting Gullah/Geechee people in improving their economic well- being and perpetuating their culture.

Cultural Resource Preservation Tools and Methods

The action alternatives presented in this study provide different strategies for the preservation and interpretation of Gullah/Geechee culture and outline specific NPS roles and responsibilities in an implementation scenario for each alternative. There are, however, many effective cultural preservation programs and tools available to local communities that are beyond the purview of the alternatives described in this study. As this study has noted, during the public meeting and consultation process, several important issues and concerns were identified that lie outside the direct authority of the NPS to address effectively. Of paramount concern was the increasing loss of land and associated Gullah/Geechee resources due to development pressures and changing local tax bases.

The following programs and tools have proven to be effective in addressing some of the critical concerns identified in this study related to the preservation of Gullah/Geechee culture and associated resources. Two of these programs, the Certified Local Government Program and the Historic Landscape Initiative, are administered by the NPS to assist local communities throughout the country with cultural resource preservation. Each State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) can also provide more detailed information on these and related state- specific tools and programs available for cultural preservation (see list below).

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Conservation easements (notwithstanding the negative impact of such easements on the traditional culture and life ways of Gullah and Geechee peoples, as noted earlier in the text of this report) are used to protect resources such as productive agricultural land, ground and surface water, riverfront land, wildlife habitat, historic sites, or scenic views. The easement is either voluntarily sold or donated by the landowner, and constitutes a legally binding agreement that prohibits certain types of development (residential or commercial) from taking place on the land. Easements are used by landowners (“grantors”) to authorize a qualified conservation organization or public agency (“grantee”) to monitor and enforce the restrictions set forth in the agreement. Conservation

easements are flexible documents tailored to each property and the needs of individual landowners. They may cover an entire parcel or portions of a property. Conservation easements can be an effective complement to government acquisition programs and the regulation of uses to protect environmentally sensitive land.

Every state in the nation has laws pertaining to conservation easements. The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws adopted the Uniform Conservation Easement Act in 1981. The Act was designed to serve as a model for state legislation to allow qualified public agencies and private conservation organizations to accept, acquire, and hold less- than- fee- simple interests in land for the purposes of conservation and preservation. Different land trusts and government entities have different requirements that must be satisfied. A general description of valid conservation purposes – and one that must be satisfied to be eligible for tax benefits — is provided by the Internal Revenue Code Section 170(h) (4)(A).

Many conservation easements involve the participation of a land trust. These nonprofit organizations have been established for the specific purpose of protecting land. The IRS recognizes them as publicly- supported charitable organizations. More than 1,100 land trusts in the United States protect over four million acres of farms, wetlands, wildlife habitat, urban gardens and parks, forests, watersheds, coastlines, river corridors, aquifer recharge areas, and trails.

A land trust is considered a qualified easement holder, and land trusts are good sources of information for private landowners that wish to explore the possibility of a conservation easement for their land. Though local, state and federal government agencies may purchase and accept donations of conservation easements, land trusts play the most critical role in working with landowners to protect conservation lands. Many landowners are more comfortable donating land to a private, nonprofit organization than to a unit of government, especially if the land trust is locally based. Land trusts often can step in to negotiate easements and raise funds for their purchase more quickly than a public agency. For further information on conservation easements, contact the following agencies:

National

Trust for Public Land
116 New Montgomery Street, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.495.4014
<http://www.tpl.org>

Land Trust Alliance
1331 H Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005- 4734
202.638.4725

**USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service**
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, DC 20013
202.720.7246
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

South Carolina

Beaufort County Open Land Trust
P.O. Box 75
Beaufort, SC 29901- 0075
Phone: 843.521.2175

Edisto Island Open Land Trust
P.O. Box 1
Edisto Island, SC 29438- 0001
Phone: 843.869.9004

Hilton Head Island Land Trust
18 Wild Laurel Lane
Hilton Head Island, SC 29926- 2649
Phone: 843.689.2595

**Kiawah Island Natural Habitat
Conservancy**
23 Beachwalker Drive
Kiawah Island, SC 29455- 5652
Phone: 843.768.2029

Lowcountry Open Land Trust
485 East Bay Street
Charleston, SC 29403- 6336
Phone: 843.577.6510
FAX: 843.577.0501

The Nature Conservancy
South Carolina Field Office
P.O. Box 5475
Columbia, SC 29250
Phone: 803.254.9049

Lord Berkeley Conservation Trust
223 N Live Oak Drive, A- 3
Moncks Corner, SC 29461- 3707
Phone: 843.719.4725
FAX: 843.719.4207

Georgia

Camden County Land Trust
308 Mush Bluff Trail
St. Mary's, Georgia 31558
Phone: 912.925.3159
FAX: 912.927.9766

Coastal Georgia Land Trust
428 Bull Street, Suite 210
Savannah, Georgia 31401
Phone: 912.231.0507
<http://www.cgltr.org>

**Sapelo Island Cultural and
Revitalization Society (SICARS)**
P.O. Box 6
Sapelo Island, Georgia 31327
Phone: 912.485.2197
FAX: 912.485.2263

St. Simons Land Trust
P.O. Box 24615
1624 Frederica Road, Suite 6
St. Simons Island, Georgia 31522
Phone: 912.638.9109
<http://www.sslt.org>

The Trust for Public Land
Georgia Office
1447 Peachtree Street, Suite 601
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
Phone: 404.873.7306

The Nature Conservancy
Georgia Field Office
1330 West Peachtree Street, Suite 410
Atlanta, Georgia 30309-2904
Phone: 404.873.6946

North Carolina

The Nature Conservancy
North Carolina Field Office
One University Place, Suite 290
4705 University Drive
Durham, North Carolina 27707
919.403.8558

North Carolina Coastal Land Trust
3806- B Park Avenue
Wilmington, North Carolina 28403
910.790.4524

Florida

The Nature Conservancy
Florida Field Office
222 South Westmonte Drive, Suite 300
Altamonte Springs, Florida 32714

North Florida Land Trust
4400 Marsh Landing Boulevard, Suite 4
Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida 32082

Certified Local Government Programs

Jointly administered by NPS in partnership with SHPOs, the Certified Local Government Program (CLG) is a local, State, and federal partnership that promotes historic preservation and development at the grassroots level. The CLG Program integrates local governments with the national historic preservation program through activities that strengthen decision-making regarding historic places at the local level. Local planning office staffs often play key roles in CLG projects, giving historic preservation a better chance of being integrated into local land-use policy.

The primary goals of the CLG Program are:

- to develop and maintain local historic preservation programs that will influence the zoning and permitting decisions critical to preserving historic properties; and
- to ensure the broadest possible participation of local governments in the national historic preservation program while maintaining preservation standards established by the Secretary of the Interior.

Local governments can significantly strengthen their local historic preservation efforts by achieving CLG status. Both the NPS and State governments, through their SHPOs, provide valuable technical assistance and matching grants to communities whose local governments are endeavoring to keep for future generations what is significant from their community's past.

Using grants awarded by SHPOs, a CLG may produce historic theme or context studies, cultural resource inventories, assessments of properties to determine their eligibility for local and National Register of Historic Places designation, building reuse and feasibility studies, design guidelines and

conservation ordinances, and publications to educate the public about the benefits of historic preservation. For further information, contact:

Certified Local Government Program
Heritage Preservation Services
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW, North Carolina- 330
Washington, DC 20240
202.343.9575

State Historic Preservation Offices

North Carolina
State Historic Preservation Office
4617 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699- 4617
919.733.4763
<http://www.hpo.dcr.state.nc.us>

Georgia
State Historic Preservation Office
Department of Natural Resources
156 Trinity Avenue, SW, Suite 101
Atlanta, Georgia 30303- 3600
404.656.2840
<http://www.dnr.state.ga.us/dnr/histpres>

South Carolina
State Historic Preservation Office
8301 Parklane Road
Columbia, South Carolina 29223
803.896.6100
<http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/histrcpl.htm>

Florida
State Historic Preservation Office
Bureau of Historic Preservation
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399- 0250
850.245.6333
<http://www.flheritage.com>

Archaeological Resources

Departments of Archaeology at universities and colleges throughout the study area.

National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
Southeast Archeological Center
2035 E. Paul Dirac Drive
Johnson Building, Suite 120
Tallahassee, Florida 32310
850.580.3011
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/seac>

Historic Landscape Initiative

The Historic Landscape Initiative is an NPS program that promotes responsible preservation practices to protect the nation's designed landscapes, like parks and gardens, as well as vernacular historic landscapes, such as farms and industrial sites.

In partnership with federal and state agencies, professional organizations, and colleges and universities, the Historic Landscape Initiative develops and disseminates guidelines for significant historic landscape preservation; produces innovative tools to raise the awareness of the general public; organizes and conducts training symposia and workshops; and provides technical assistance for significant properties and districts. The information provided by the Initiative has influenced project work at local, regional, national, and even international levels.

For some cultural landscapes, especially those that are best considered ethnographic or heritage landscapes, these Guidelines may not apply. However, if people working with these properties decide

that community coherence may be affected by physical place and space – or if there is potential for loss of landscape character whose significance is rooted in the community's activities and processes (or other aspects of its history)-- this guide may be of service. An ethnographic landscape is a landscape containing a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources. Examples are contemporary settlements, sacred religious sites, and massive geological structures. Small plant communities, animals, subsistence and ceremonial grounds are often components. Gullah/Geechee lands and communities meet these criteria.

The Historic Landscape Initiative develops preservation planning tools that respect and reveal the relationship between Americans and their land. This initiative provides essential guidance to accomplish sound preservation practice on a variety of landscapes, from parks and gardens to rural villages and agricultural landscapes. Together, the publications, workshops, technical assistance, and national policy direction provided by the Historic Landscape Initiative make up a critical base of information widely used by a diverse audience that includes professional planners, landscape architects, architects, and historians, as well as historic property managers, administrators, homeowners, academics, and students. It is estimated that information generated by the Initiative has reached over 700,000 individuals nationwide. For further information, contact:

Historic Landscape Initiative
Heritage Preservation Services
National Park Service
1201 Eye St., NW
Washington, DC 20005
202.354.2257
FAX: 202.371.1791
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/hli/hlitem.htm>
<http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/hli/introguid.htm>